

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

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Date: June 21, 1949

SUBJECT: Interview with Professor Bergstrom

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The interview was opened by asking Professor Bergstrom how it happened that he was in the Caucasus area at the time that the Germans entered. He explained that in August 1941 the members of the Academy of Science of Leningrad, to which he was attached at the time, were given permission to leave the city and go to the East, since the Academy itself was to be evacuated. Since the Academy had local sections in the Caucasus region and his family was on vacation for the summer there, he desired to join them. He went by water and had to avoid Moscow, because all railway transportation was restricted to military. The trip from Leningrad to Astrakhan took 25 days. The terrible deterioration in transportation and supplies that took place in that short period of time astonished the professor. He was able to find his family and take them to the KALMUK ASSR, where he settled in the capital, Elista, and taught Russian from September 1941 to June 1942. According to Professor Bergstrom, since VE-Day the KALMUK ASSR has been destroyed, because the Kaluzka revolted almost to a man and aided the Germans. Those who were still in the mountains were assembled by the Soviet soldiers and transported to Siberia. In addition to the Kaluzka, the KARACHAI (a Tatar people) also revolted and were deported to Siberia.

It is Professor Bergstrom's opinion that the most explosive areas of the USSR are 1. UZBEK SSR, 2. TADJIK SSR, 3. TURKMENISTAN, 4. BURIAI MONGOLIA-- east of Ulan Ude only. The TATAR ASSR (of the Kanan) which was strongly nationalistic had been rather thoroughly purged between 1936 and 1940, when the intelligentsia were liquidated. Too few of the Tatars now remain in the area to cause much trouble. The nationalism usually credited with causing the unrest in these minority peoples is not the "abstract nationalism"

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that we of the west understand) rather it is a substitute symbol of some sort of unity of desire to be cut from under the control of the Russians. The areas of strong "nationalist" sentiment are the following: 1. West Ukraine, 2. Crimea (the Tatars and Greeks have now been transplanted to Siberia), 3. Caucasia (the Don, Kuban groups have had their leaders liquidated, but there were too many of the tribes people to transplant them to Siberia.) 4. Caucasia with the number of small ethnic minorities. Only the Armenians are devoted and loyal to the Soviets. The PAH-TURKIAN idea does not have a great appeal to the Central Asians since these peoples do not like to be linked with the Turks, whom they consider as "younger brothers". (Note-- Professor Bergstrom was equating PAH-TURK with PAH-TURKIAN.) The Professor thought that Pakistan attracted the Central Asians more than the Pan-Turanian idea. There is a repulsion between many of the Central Asians and Iraq, a rather neutral attitude toward Afghanistan. Many Central Asians have migrated through Afghanistan.

When asked about the economic progress in Central Asian areas between the years 1919 to 1939, Professor Bergstrom replied that one can say that there was considerable progress. The peasants formerly worked on very large farms at a very low standard of life. After the revolution, they were given land, and their living standard greatly improved. Later then the collective farms were forced upon them they vaguely claimed dying up the explosive control of the land. It must be admitted, however, that the economic condition is improved even on the collective farms. The people are dissatisfied because a) they want to own their land, b) they cannot make the pilgrimages to Mecca and since they are largely Moslems this prohibition is disliked, c) they believe that their personal freedoms are too restricted. Their standards of medical care and general education are high and can be said to be as good as European Russia. The living standard has improved most markedly in the lower stratum. The general level of the people of the borderlands had actually lived better than the average Russian peasants. The standard treatment that was meted out to the nomads (as if they were Russian peasants) has been the most resented feature of the USSR control. For example, a Russian peasant with 50 head of cattle was considered a wealthy man who had to employ others to work for him, but a nomad with 500 head of cattle was just an ordinary homemaker who could take care of his flock himself. To restrict the nomads to the same number of cattle as the peasant was a distinct hardship.

To the question, "Do the Russian officials live better than the natives in these borderlands?", Professor Bergstrom answered in the negative. It was his opinion that the key positions were held by Russians, who in actual fact decide all important questions, but they enjoy their privileges as "nomads", but not because they are Russians. The "official houses" are all set aside for government and party personnel in the areas, and Professor Bergstrom cited examples of places in which the native officials was actually better off than the Russian official. The Russians in the borderlands are usually of the two categories: 1. deportees living in concentration camps with no responsibility for their livelihood 2. officials.

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There are evidence of dissatisfaction even among the Soviet bureaucratic groups, although less than among the minority peoples.

Professor Baysstrom thought that the Russians were using Outer Mongolian troops in the Russian Zone in Germany because the low level of civilization of the Mongols made them uninterested in the Western European mode of life and would not cause them to be adversely influenced by a better degree of life in Germany.

The question was raised about the situation in TASHKENT and that the Professor knew about the University of Tashkent. He said that he had been in Tashkent 1929-1930. The University was a full university teaching medicine, mathematics, education, philology, history, literature, mathematics, and natural sciences. There were about 1000 students and 200 teachers. The high rate of teachers per student was explained by the fact that considerable research work was carried on at the University. The University was administered by the Committee on Higher Education at Moscow under the direction of Minister Kotlov. Certain scientific magazines were published at Tashkent. In addition to the Minister of Higher Education, there was the Central Committee of the Uzbekistan Communist Party which maintained a Department of Culture and Propaganda and supervised the education of the Party schools. These schools were not dependent upon the Minister of Education. The Committee also controlled most aspects of the press, publishing, movies, music, painting, theater, etc. that had a political point of view. There was in addition a Committee of Arts (non-political) that was an independent organization and headed up into a Ministry of Arts. The Ministry of Education in Moscow concerned itself with the primary and secondary schools only. The education in the hands of the Central Committee in Moscow itself. This Committee had set up schools for agitators and cadres leaders where they prepared the natives to be infiltrated, some as officials in Sinkiang but some as secret agents. Professor Baysstrom knew that a New Institute of Near East had been set up in Tashkent in 1945 apparently to take the place of the semi-military, agent training center (for officers of the Red Army and Soviet Party members only) that had formerly operated in Moscow from 1931/1938 and was a military section of the Oriental Institute of Moscow.

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